

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

Сор 2

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE • OFFICE OF COMMUNICATION • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

NO. 125

1974 YEARBOOK OF AGRICULTURE

MAKING YOUR OWN SOAP

A Handy Craft To Know. Like many routine and necessary chores of yesteryear, soap making is making a comeback. Today, the necessity of the task has been removed for us by the neat stacks of uniform-sized bars of soap at the store. But many people find that making soap at home can be a nostalgic, creative and thrifty activity -- it's a practical way to use up waste fat from cooking. Soap making is not for everyone, however. Working with boiling fat and lye demands that steady hands and considerable caution be made partners in the production. A fact sheet to help guide you to your own homemade soap has been prepared by USDA's Agricultural Research Service. The publication includes two recipes (one for nine pounds of soap; the other for one bar of soap); directions for mixing the ingredients and for making molds; and tips on adding perfume and coloring. Single free copies of the fact sheet, "Soap Making At Home" (CA 72-35), may be requested from Information Division, ARS/USDA, Room 346, Federal Center Building, Hyattsville, Maryland 20782.



WINTER FOOD PREVIEW

Food prices will continue upward this winter. Retail food prices may increase about 3-4% from fall. Three factors will boost prices this winter:

--Smaller supplies of some foods, compared with last winter. Harvests of feed grains and soybeans, the daily rations for livestock, suffered major setbacks in 1974. Producers will adjust to short feed supplies and higher operating costs by cutting production about 10 percent or more in 1975 for poultry, eggs, and pork. Supplies of many canned vegetables will be tight.

--Continuing inflation. Inflation means higher costs all along the food marketing chain. Four-fifths of the 15 percent rise in retail food prices in 1974 is attributed to cost increases occurring beyond the farm gate. The cost of marketing food in 1975 will continue upward more slowly than in 1974, but will still add to the grocery bill.

--Seasonal food price rises. During the winter there is a seasonal drop in supplies of foods produced from livestock; we draw more of our food supplies from storage, and rely on fresh produce shipped over long distances.

Several factors will be at work this winter to moderate rising prices:

--Demand for food by consumers may slacken. Mounting unemployment, little or no real economic growth, and continuing erosion of purchasing power due to inflation may cause consumers to budget more closely and shop more selectively than last year.

--Some foods will be more plentiful than they have been for several years--potatoes and sweetpotatoes, rice, wheat for pastas, peanuts, dry beans and peas, onions, and tomato products. There will be plenty of beef. Supplies of fishery products are generally larger.

A more detailed look at supply and price prospects for the winter months of 1975 shows:

Wholesale sugar prices dropped slightly in December after months of steep rises. This may signal a pause in the soaring retail price. Although sugar supplies will remain tight and prices high this winter, lower per capita use of sugar may help ease prices.

Large supplies of frozen fish, built up during 1974, will be with us in early 1975. Some of the more abundant frozen items include fish sticks and portions, shrimp, crabmeat, and fillets of cod, flounder, ocean perch, and whiting. A check of recent retail prices showed frozen shrimp and ocean perch fillets cheaper than a year before, frozen haddock up moderately, and canned tuna and sardines sharply higher.

Beef will remain a good buy this winter. Beef producers are selling many animals directly from breeding herds which they expanded during the years when demand for beef was strong and feed prices were lower. With large beef supplies this fall, retail prices remained on a par with those of the fall of 1973. This winter, however, supplies will decline seasonally from the fall, causing some price increase.

The beef supply picture currently includes a large number of animals not grain finished to the Choice or Prime grades. This 'non-fed' beef is being marketed in a multitude of ways. You may see more steaks or roasts bearing the USDA Good grade or bearing no grade at all. Such meat is often priced below comparable cuts in the Choice or Prime grades. Most of this 'non-fed' beef comes from younger cattle which rival more mature beef in tenderness but may not have the same degree of fat marbling.

The large beef supply will help to temper rising prices for poultry products and pork. But with the sharp cutback in hog slaughter this winter, look for pork prices to rise. A similar situation exists in the poultry industry. Further curtailment in poultry production will occur this winter, adding moderately to egg and broiler prices. Turkeys are "specialized" for the holidays, but winter turkey prices will be higher. Farmers will send fewer gobblers to market than last winter, but cold storage stocks will be larger.

After large price increases during 1974, dairy prices may be fairly steady in early 1975. Large stocks of cheese, left over from recent months, and slackening consumer demand for dairy products may work to hold prices in place. During the past year consumers purchased less whole milk, nonfat dry milk, and cottage cheese while increasing their purchases of American and other cheeses, skim milk, and butter. Butter's popularity gained when prices eased while margarine prices increased. Prices of the two spreads will remain close together this winter.

Fruits and vegetables have a varied outlook this winter. We will have more potatoes, sweet potatoes, rice, and dry beans and peas, all of which were in tight supply last year. Growers are getting much less for these crops than they did a year ago; consumers are paying moderately less. Potato prices, will rise slightly -- as they usually do in the winter storage season. Dry bean prices, are weakening at the farm level and may drop further at the grocery store. Onions are plentiful with ample supplies to last through winter.

An early cold snap in the fall shut off the supply of fresh vegetables grown in the Midwest and Northeast. Especially affected were sweet corn and green beans. This winter, as always, we will get the bulk of our fresh vegetables from Florida, California, and Mexico. Though it is difficult to forecast prices in this fast-moving business, retail fresh vegetable prices may average slightly to moderately higher than last winter.

There will be a mountain of fresh citrus fruit at the produce counter. Orange production, which peaks in winter, will reach an alltime high, as will the output of lemons and tangelos. Look for more Temples but fewer tangerines and grapefruit. Citrus fruit in chilled, frozen, or canned form will be abundant. We've been drinking much more chilled citrus juices lately, and paying only slightly higher prices. With enormous stocks of frozen orange juice, prices remain very steady.

Other fruits in good to excellent supply include cranberries, apples (especially in the East and Midwest), pears, and grapes for raisin making and for fresh use.

Warehouses hold larger supplies of canned noncitrus fruit than last winter, thanks to bountiful harvests during 1974. There are plenty of canned peaches, apple sauce and slices, and tart cherries, and more of most other noncitrus fruits. However, the past year saw some steep increases in retail prices for canned fruit. Costs increased for both the grower and the fruit packer; and consumer prices will go up accordingly. Expect firm to higher canned fruit prices during early 1975.

(Continued on Page 4)

WINTER FOOD PREVIEW (cont.)

Prices increased for nearly all canned vegetables, for much the same reasons. In addition, the pack of canned vegetables was smaller in 1974, except for tomatoes and products. Canned vegetable supplies remain in tight supply as in the past several years. Some exceptions are sauerkraut, canned spinach, beets, and sweet potatoes.

In general, stocks of frozen vegetables are much better. Some of the largest supply buildups in frozen vegetables have occurred for frozen carrots, peas, spinach, okra, black-eyed peas, and greens. Cauliflower and broccoli also are in good supply.

WINTER FUN

It Can Be Hazardous. Winter recreation activities are exciting and fun. Skiing, snowmobiling, winter hiking and camping are all becoming more popular every year. Many people are not aware that outdoor winter activities can be hazardous. But it's an entirely different world out there than last summer. Winter's harsh elements of wind, cold, snow and ice demand that we prepare to cope with them on their own terms. Preparation is especially important when the coping is to be done in remote areas or at high altitudes. Knowing something of the area, the weather conditions, the limitations of your body and equipment, and what to do in emergencies are all common sense preparations for an enjoyable and safe outing. Some valuable winter safety tips can be found in a guide developed for use by snow survey workers with USDA's Soil Conservation Service. These SCS employees are engaged in hazardous winter operation, mostly in high remote areas where conditions increase the danger of accidents and even threaten survival. "Snow Survey Safety Guide" includes information on clothing and personal and emergency equipment; safety guidelines on traveling and vehicles; what to do if you get lost or an avalanche occurs; first aid for injuries or illness from cold, snow, accidents; and many other tips to keep you safe, comfortable, healthy, and happy in the snow. The booklet is a handy size to take along on your trip for quick reference. Copies of "Snow Survey Safety Guide" (AH-137), are 85¢ each from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

A CORRECTION

Not Inflation. "The Real Facts About Food" slide set is priced at \$35.00 (rather than \$15.00 as reported in the October-November issue of SERVICE) and the filmstrip is \$15.00 (rather than \$10.50). The 1974 slide set of Agricultural Charts is \$30.00 a set instead of \$10.00.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write: Lillie Vincent, Editor of SERVICE, Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Telephone (202) 447-5437.
